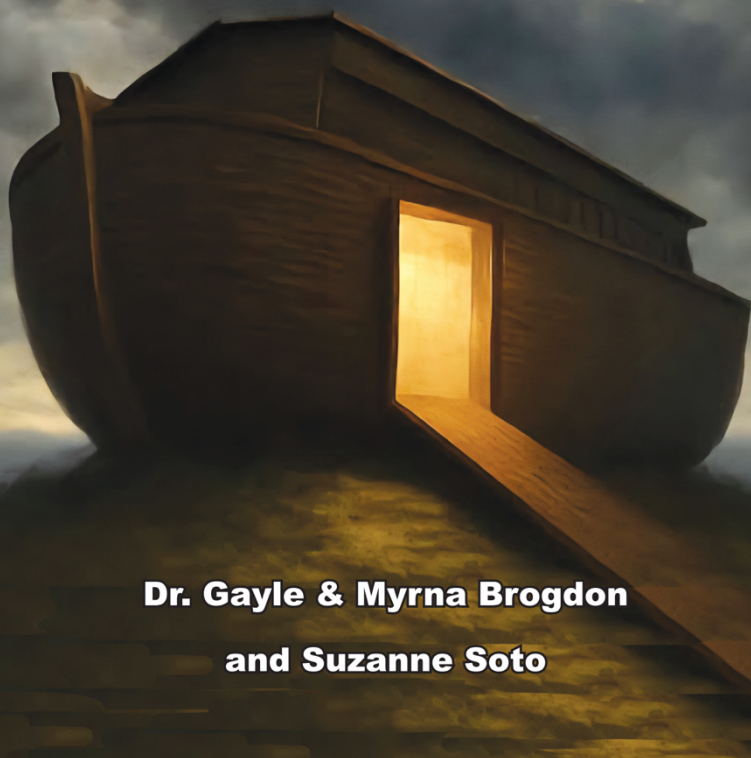


GOD STORIES

And More

THE OPEN DOOR



Dr. Gayle & Myrna Brogdon

and Suzanne Soto

GOOD NEWS FOR YOU

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (ESV)

The Gospel is the good news about what Jesus did for us. All of humanity has sinned—we’ve all done wrong, fallen short, and cannot fix our broken relationship with God on our own. Because of this, we deserve to be separated from Him.

However, God loved us so much that He made a way for us to be forgiven and restored. Jesus, God’s Son, came to earth and lived a perfect life without sin. He took the punishment we deserved and demonstrated the ultimate sacrifice by dying on the cross for us, so our sins—past, present, and future—could be forgiven. Jesus was buried in a tomb, and on the third day, He rose again from the dead. His resurrection proved that He has power over sin and death.

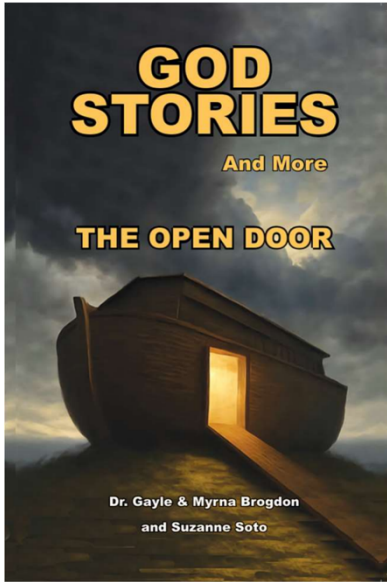
If you were to die today, do you know where you would spend eternity? Here is a simple prayer to consider if you have not yet given your life to Jesus Christ and want to live in eternity with Him.

The Bible says that if you confess with your mouth that “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. So right now, you can pray: “I believe in my heart and confess with my mouth that Jesus is the Lord and Savior of my life. I repent of my sins and ask for Your forgiveness. Thank You, Jesus, for saving me and giving me new life. When I die, I will live in eternity with You.”

THE OPEN DOOR!

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Revelation 3:20



GOD STORIES And More... THE OPEN DOOR! are true stories (testimonies) of men and women who came to know Christ in their darkest and most desperate times.

GOD STORIES And More... THE OPEN DOOR demonstrates a Biblical concept of salvation, as an open door for all people, no matter where they are spiritually or what they have done in the past, to enter into a personal relationship by accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

An example of someone radically changed by the power of Jesus Christ is found in the story of Saul of Tarsus

in the Bible. He once was a murderous persecutor of Christians, but was radically transformed by an encounter with the risen Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus.

The story of Noah's Ark provided only one door on the ark for Noah, his family, and the animals to enter through to find safety from the destructive flood of judgement. In the same way, Jesus offers an escape from eternal separation from God by proclaiming, "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved." (John 10:9).

No person's life is beyond transformation. Will you walk through the open door that Jesus is offering, and make Him your Lord and Savior? We pray that you will because He is waiting for you.

For more information:

Email: life4educators@aol.com

Website: <https://www.god-stories.com>

Story 1: Entrance This Way

"Jesus answered, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" John 3:5-7 NLKV



Dan Rodriguez
Harlingen, Texas

There is a strict requirement, according to Jesus, to "enter the kingdom of God." If we take seriously Jesus' words, everyone who dies does not automatically enter heaven; no matter what is said in well-meaning funeral eulogies. The requirement is "*you must be born again.*" I was raised in a "Christian" home. Both of my parents were God-fearing believers in Christ.



I was raised believing that attending church, reading the Bible and

prayer were important and necessary in the

Christian life [and they are]. However, in my mind I had substituted those things for being a child of God and someday hoping to enter heaven. But I was mistaken. I had totally bypassed the only requirement for entrance into heaven: a new birth!

I began serving actively in the U.S. Army in 1972. One rainy Sunday morning, after dutifully attending a church service in Louisiana and heading back to my base, I was the recipient of a God-encounter. As I drove to the base, an overwhelming presence filled my car that left me fearful of even turning my head toward the front passenger side. Somehow, I knew that the Presence was the Lord sitting next to me! I heard a voice which said [whether out loud or in my own mind, I do not know], "*You give Me your money, but you won't give Me your heart.*" [I had been taught by my parents to give offerings in church].

I knew that the Lord was challenging my religiosity [which doesn't get one into heaven]. All I could do was say, "Forgive me, Lord. Be merciful to me, a sinner" [Lk. 18:13]. On that day, I experienced what no one can do for themselves: a new birth, from above! A complete life change!

Have you been born again? Call upon the Lord while He is near to you right now! Humble yourself and express your need to the Lord, today. "*God, be merciful to me, a sinner!*"

Story 2: Someone Is At My Door

"Behold I stand at the door and knock.

*If anyone hears My voice and opens the door,
I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."*

Revelation 3:20

One Saturday morning, during my sophomore year in high school, a group of people came knocking on my door. I was not being a good host and only cracked the door open. I was not interested in what they were saying. You see, I was raised in a Christian home...and would say my life was "drug addicted." I was "drugged" to church every Sunday and Wednesday, and "drugged" to church many days in between. I had an understanding of who Jesus was as my Savior, but had not accepted Him personally into my life.



Carl Flowers
Edinburg, Texas

When one of the men at the door asked me if I had accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior, I answered, "I know about Jesus, Bro." to which he responded, "That is not what I asked." He went on to say, "If you were to die right now, where would you spend eternity?" Ohhh, that got my attention!! I didn't know what to say. He then said, "Would you like to know?" "Yes!" They then laid hands on me and lead me in a simple sinner's prayer to receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Question answered.

I would love to say that my life immediately changed and that I started toting the Bible and sharing the Word of God, but that would come much later. On that particular Saturday morning, I made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. I did not do it because of my mother, or grandmother, or any other person. I did it for myself. I realized I wanted to spend eternity with Jesus, and that God had more for me in this life, which I could only live with Him.

And just like what Jesus did for the disciples on the road to Emmaus when they were lost and in their time of need, He showed up. Jesus showed up to me on that Saturday morning in the least unexpected way. He revealed Himself to a lost, young teenage boy, and received me as one of His own. THANK YOU, JESUS, FOR KNOCKING ON MY DOOR AND SAVING ME!

**BEHOLD,
I STAND
AT THE
DOOR
AND
KNOCK**

Story 3: God Is With Me

For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13



Sara Soto Gonzalez
Mercedes, Texas

I am the youngest of seven children. My parent's house was a small country house in the middle of nowhere. I remember my oldest brother, Alex, loved to leave the door open at night for a cool breeze. We were roommates in my parents living room. Although he was 19 years my senior, I always wanted to be wherever he was. Age did not matter to me when it came to my older siblings, we are all so close.

That night, it was dark out and Alex said, "Let's go outside." I, being so afraid of the dark, did not want to step out that door. Somehow, he led me outside, and I stayed glued to his leg. He took me all the way to the edge of the levee behind our house and kept assuring me that God was with us, and told me not to be afraid. I managed to calm down and notice that Alex had such a peace about him. After coming inside, he began to tell me about Jesus Christ. Who He was and how He came to save us. At such an early age, I did not comprehend all the details of Jesus, but with time I came to learn more about Him. That night, Alex asked me if I would like to accept Him as my personal savior? I said, "Yes."

Afterwards, he began to tell me that when we die, we would go to heaven. I recall sobbing and telling him, "What about Mom, Dad, Alicia, Linda, Joe,

**For, "Everyone who
calls on the name
of the Lord will be
saved"**

Romans 10:13

David, and Diana?" My seven years young heart did not want to leave anyone behind. He hugged me tightly and reassured me that we would share Jesus with them, and that we would all go to heaven. Not long after that, my parents and siblings, all came to know Jesus Christ.

Life has not been an easy one, but the Lord Jesus Christ has been faithful to guide me in the right path. My parents and siblings have all instilled Godly wisdom upon my life. Thank you to my late brother, Alex Soto, Jr., for sharing Jesus Christ with me many years ago

Story 4: God Does Miracles!

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, all things have become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

By the age of 11, I was smoking pot and drinking alcohol. I was arrested multiple times. Just before my 21st birthday, I went "ding-dong ditching" (ringing doorbells and running away) with some friends. I would steal flags off people's porches and go through their unlocked cars. Finally, I was caught and ended up with a prison sentence. My girlfriend bailed me out, but I went right back to drinking and doing drugs with a vengeance. I didn't care whether I lived or died. I actually prayed that I would die because I did not want to go to prison.



Nate Morrow
Bluffton, Indiana

While working at a truck stop, I would find Christian pamphlets everywhere. I called them "God stuff", because I didn't grow up in church, and I didn't know anything about God. One day, I received a gospel pamphlet showing a man standing before God, crying and pleading for his life, but Jesus said it was too late, and to depart from Him because He never knew him. I remember thinking I didn't want to be like that guy in the story. At that moment, I told God, "If you think you can do something better with me than the way I am living, then go ahead. I'm done." At that moment, I accepted Christ—no big elaborate prayer. No one walked me through the details of how to accept Christ. Just me telling God I was done.

I don't remember a big change happening, but my life became more in tune with the things of God. Eventually, I stopped using God's name as a curse word and stopped stealing. God delivered me from alcohol and drugs, and I've been sober and drug-free now for 20 years. God blessed me with a wonderful wife and children. He has allowed me to earn my GED and college degree. My felony charge was reduced to a misdemeanor. Since then, I became a social worker and a minister. I now choose to go back to jails, but for the purpose of sharing my testimony and the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am truly blessed!! Old things truly passed away, and all things have become new!



Story 5: Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve!

*"Be ye not weary in doing good works,
for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint NOT!" Galatians 6:9*



Cindy Morrow
Bluffton, Indiana

I have known the Lord all my life. I was blessed to be born into a strong, whole-hearted, Bible-believing family on both sides. Being a Christian came naturally to me until my teen years. During that time, I became very worldly because my teenage mind wanted to look and act like everyone else. In my eyes, those who identified as Christians were nerdy and strict, and I wanted to be cool! As I set off to find my "own way," my parents and family prayed for me daily. Eventually, I met a good man to share my life with, and God transformed me from my reckless, sinful ways into a more Spirit-filled wife and mother of three precious children. I attended church every Sunday and served God wholeheartedly.

Everything was going great until the enemy crept back into my life and used my self-esteem to lead to my downfall. I realized that my spiritual life crumbled because I was living according to what I had been taught rather than developing my own individual relationship with the Lord. I had never read the Bible for myself. As a result, I eventually lost my husband, my children, three houses, two cars, and even my job. I separated from my husband and began drinking alcohol again. My foundation was not built on God's holy word but rather on my family's belief system.

After several years of collateral damage to my life, my children, and my family, God revealed Himself to me again in a profound moment as I was headed to the liquor store. I clearly heard God say, "You need to choose this (alcohol) or Me,

because I have work for you to do." It struck me deeply, and I answered out loud, "Well, God, I know where beer leads me, so I choose You!" My new husband, being the wonderful man he is, heard my experience and said, "Well, if you quit, I'll quit!" That marked the beginning of a much deeper, individual relationship with God, based on His word spoken directly to me. God restored my family, my children, and even the material possessions I had lost. I discovered a relationship with God rather than merely following a religion.



Story 6: The Adventure Begins

“Jesus said, marvel not that I say unto you, you must be born again.” John 3:7

Growing up in a Christian home gave me the opportunity to hear the gospel. It wasn't open for discussion; if it was Sunday, we were in church. My parents, Jim and Agnes Crow, were committed to teaching each of their children to know and love God. I grew up in a home where Christ had the highest place of honor.

But something happened when I was about ten years old. I remember riding with my brother Marvin in the back of a pick-up truck, out across a pasture. Marvin, who had recently surrendered to the ministry, suddenly looked at me and said, “Bobby, have you ever received Jesus Christ into your heart?”



**Bobby Crow, Missionary
CD. Victoria, Tamps, Mexico**

My first reaction was, “What is he talking about? He knows that I know Jesus, I go to church, I pray... so why is he asking me that? He knows the answer!” However, as he went over the plan of salvation, he explained to me that being a Christian is more than going to church, praying, or knowing about Jesus. He explained that every person needs to come to a point in life when he or she has to decide what to do about Jesus. To be truly a Christian, he explained, I needed to ask Jesus to come into my heart, forgive my sins and give me the gift of eternal life.

As he continued sharing the Scriptures with me, I finally realized my need, and I did call upon the Lord Jesus Christ, inviting Him to come into my heart and give me eternal life.

That decision was the starting point of the greatest adventure a person can embark on in life. I believe that, as a result of that decision when I was just ten years old, I have eternal life today. I believe that I received the gift of salvation and began living for eternity from the very moment I invited Jesus Christ to come into my heart. Such an assurance makes life exciting, worthwhile and meaningful. It makes life an adventure!

Have you ever thought what it would be like to have someone help you in trials, comfort you when depression comes, heal your body when you are sick, speak to you directions for your life. If you say “YES”, then the Lord is saying Jeremiah 33:3, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee and show you great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” Just one CALL TO JESUS AND SALVATION IS YOURS!

Story 7: It's My Story and I'm Stickin' to It!

"And He called to him the twelve, and began to send them forth two by two; and gave them power over unclean spirits." Mark 6:7



Ron Corzine
Ft. Worth, Texas

It happened many years ago. I was just nine years old. It was a wonderful moment in my life. It set in motion what now is. It was the day I received the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

I can still remember it just like it was yesterday. The church my dad pastored in Denison, Texas was preparing for a tent revival meeting. The tent was erected and old slat benches were placed over the sawdust-covered ground. I was a young boy and the evangelist Daniel Vestal Jr. was just thirteen years of age.

His father Daniel Vestal was a well-known evangelist and friends with my preacher dad. Out of their friendship, my dad gave his young son the opportunity to preach his first revival.

It was a hot, sultry summer night, and at the conclusion of his message when the young evangelist said, "Would anyone like to receive the gift of eternal life given through Jesus Christ?" I quickly moved to the front where Dad was standing and said, "I do." With tears in his eyes, we knelt together and prayed, and the great transaction took place. I simply believed and received, and I entered into the life of God. And this was the beginning of what He had planned for my life. Even as a nine-year-old, I knew something wonderful had happened. I must admit during a few of my early teenage years I traveled some back roads that I should not have taken, but it didn't take the One who now lived in me long to get me back on the right road.



I do enjoy from time to time calling to remembrance this time in my young life. Of course, it is not the memory that keeps me going, but the life I received from God and my daily walk with Him

Sixty-six years later, I still believe, and I'm enjoying more everyday my relationship with God.

So... it's my story and I'm stickin' to it. And He is my life and I'm stickin' with Him.

Story 8: The Lord Heard!

*"I sought the Lord, and He answered me;
He delivered me from all my fears." Psalm 34:4*

I grew up in Mexico, where there was no church or pastor in my rural community. From a young age, my parents taught me about God and His Son, Jesus Christ. When I became a young adult, I moved in with a family that attended church every Sunday. I always enjoyed going to church, but I was afraid of God. I wanted to know Him and please Him, but I didn't know how or what I needed to do to feel His love. I understood that He loved everyone, but I didn't experience that love myself.

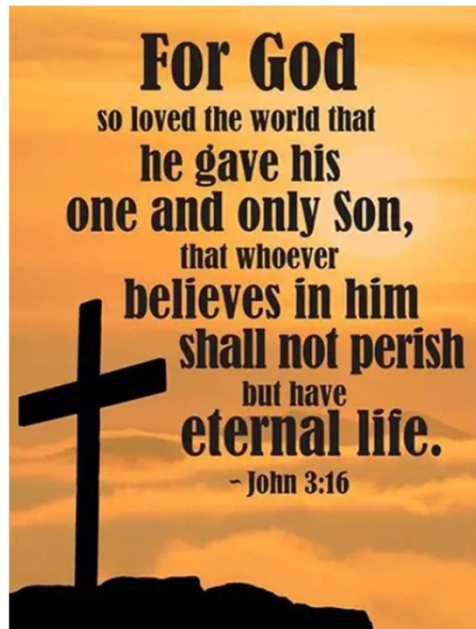
One day, I met two Christian ladies at a church meeting. They radiated joy, and I couldn't help but ask one of them, "What makes you so happy?" She quickly replied, "Jesus lives in my heart!" I was eager to learn how she did this because I wanted to experience the same love, joy, and peace, and to no longer fear Him.

The leaders of the meeting prayed for me, and for once I felt God's love cover me like a warm blanket on a cold night. For the first time, I spoke to Jesus directly and said, "Lord, come and live in my heart." I started reading the Bible, attending prayer meetings, and wanting to be around people that could mentor me about my new walk with Jesus.

Months later, I repented before the Lord and accepted Him as my Lord and Savior. The best decision I made many years ago was to seek the Lord. The fear I once had was replaced with love, peace, joy, and the assurance, ..."that whoever believes in Him (Jesus) shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16



Maria Ellwood
Santa Maria, Texas



Story 9: The New Me

"And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins." Mark 2:22



Sandra Carrales
Mercedes, Texas

My salvation story has been a journey. Much like wine that takes time to ferment and improves with age, my salvation has also deepened over the years. I gave my life to Jesus at the age of 16 after attending confirmation classes at my church. However, as a young teenager, I didn't pursue my relationship with God as I should have. I became involved in worldly activities and felt no remorse for the way I was living. I was living just like everyone else around me.

Several years later, I got married, had children, and started attending church regularly. I knew God was present in my life, but I still didn't feel the connection to Him that I desired. Despite this, I continued to seek God.

After the passing of my husband, I began attending my daughter's church. It was a wonderful experience! I started learning more about God. One Sunday, they held a water baptism, and I decided I wanted to be baptized. It was during this time that I rededicated my life to Jesus, asking the Holy Spirit to fill me and help me understand the Bible.

Life took off in a new direction after that! I began reading the Bible with greater understanding. God connected me with some Christian women who became my mentors. I joined a Bible study group and a small cell group. Recently, Jesus convicted me about the importance of forgiveness. I approached those I had offended and asked for their forgiveness.

MARK 2:22 NLT

"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the wine would burst the wineskins, and the wine and the skins would both be lost. New wine calls for new wineskins."

I now see that God is pouring His "new wine," which represents what it means to be born again, into new wineskins. I am grateful for all that God has done in my life, and I appreciate all that He is teaching me now. I embrace being His "new wineskin."

Story 10: He Brought Linens But Left With Life

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

We had been away from home for two weeks at a Mission Meeting. For two days we had driven through the beautiful Andean Mountains of western Venezuela. It was hot, humid, and dirty! At the hotel, (a twinkle rating, not a star rating), they said we didn't have a reservation. All the rooms in town were full because of a mid-year Denominational Convention.

After talking and pleading for a while, our family of four was taken to a room out back of the hotel. The windows were painted black. The bed was covered with dust. And the cobwebs hadn't been cleaned in a while. It was all that we could get, so we took it. The young man that showed us the room left to get towels and bedding. We had our own sheets, so while Norma, my wife, started consoling our daughters, ages 13 and 12, I began to strip the beds so we could use our own sheets.

There was a knock at the door and a courteous young man brought us towels and sheets. He asked why we, North Americans, were in his town of San Carlos. I shared with him about our mid-year Convention meeting saying that people from all over Venezuela would be there, and that he was welcome to come at night for the services.

I then shared with him the love of Jesus. That Jesus could change his life by forgiving his sins and giving him eternal life. The Bible tells us that, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him can have (receive) eternal life"

John 3:16. He was interested, so we prayed together and he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

He had come to our hotel door bringing linens, but he left with life, and a big smile. The Bible tells us that, "Beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things." Romans 10:15 but beautiful are the

lives of those who believe in the Good News of Jesus Christ. Would you accept the great gift of forgiveness that God has for you today?



Dr. Joe Powell
Pryor, Oklahoma
International Missionary,
Retired



Story 11: The God I Didn't Know

"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3



Janie Sandoval
Harlingen, Texas

All my life, I lived for myself and never feared God. On January 17, 1998, everything changed. I was sitting in my living room with my children, enjoying the sweet smell of rain in the distance. My 14-year-old son, Saul, mentioned three different times that he was going to untie the dog before the rain came. Each time, I heard a voice in my head saying, "He is going to get struck by lightning."

All I felt was fear. I tried to get up to stop him, but my body felt like lead. As my son turned the corner of the house, seconds later, lightning struck. My children screamed as they witnessed him being struck.

At the hospital, we were told there was nothing they could do for him because too much electricity was running through his body. They weren't equipped to handle lightning strike victims, and he probably wouldn't make it through the night. We felt hopeless.

Soon, my mother-in-law arrived, bringing a glimmer of hope, but not for long. I hoped she would pray to her God — the God who answers her prayers — asking Him to have mercy and give me back my son. But when she saw me, she grabbed hold of me and said, "Janie, I've never seen you like this. This is the hand of God. Call on Him, and He will change your life." Then she turned and walked out the door, taking all my hope with her. She didn't pray. She didn't ask to see him. I was left alone.

Back in my son's room, I began to recall what my mother-in-law had told me about God: how much He loves me and how He is watching over me. At that moment, I called upon her God for the first time. I wanted to know the God she served — the God who answers her prayers. I said, "God, if You are really there, and if You truly love me like my mother-in-law says, I beg You, please don't take my son away. I promise I will serve You all the days of my life."

Later that night, a lightning specialist arrived from San Antonio, Texas, asking, "Where is the boy who was struck by lightning?" The nurses brought him into the room, and to everyone's amazement, all of Saul's burn marks were gone! Only the entrance and exit wounds remained visible. That day, my life was changed forever by a God I did not know — a God who heard my prayer for salvation and for my son's life. He answered both. My son lives as a testimony to the power of God.

Story 12: It Is By God's Grace!

"For by grace you have been saved by faith." Ephesians 2:8

My path to salvation is likely similar to many others. I was raised in a Christian home, surrounded by Christian parents, grandparents, family, and friends. Given my environment, my profession of faith in Jesus was almost inevitable. With a deep desire for God, I chose to follow Christ at a very early age.

Throughout my teenage years, trusting in Jesus came easily, but as life's challenges arose, my faith began to waver.

Like many individuals raised in the church, I started to "deconstruct" my beliefs and question my faith. I was terrified that if my theology was wrong, my faith would be too. Could I really be saved if I believed in things that weren't true?

After all, Hindus and Muslims often have faith based on their proximity to others in the same religion. Had I fallen into the same fate?



**Matthew Machner
Dawson, Texas**

I owe a great deal of gratitude to many formal and informal mentors who patiently guided me through my theological struggles. During one of these conversations, a truth dawned on me—something many of us often take for granted. "For by grace you have been saved by faith. Nothing you did could ever earn this salvation, for it was the love gift from God that brought us to Christ" (Eph. 2:8 TPT).

I have heard this scripture for as long as I can remember, but it was during this crisis that God helped me understand it deeply. There is nothing any of us can do to earn salvation. Our salvation is not dependent on our denomination, politics, good deeds, or sins. Our salvation is solely a result of Jesus and the abundance of His grace. For that, I am eternally grateful.



Story 13: Rising Out of Addiction

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:36



Jacob Plattner
Searcy, Arkansas

Hatred is described as an intense feeling of dislike, aversion, or hostility toward someone or something. Why did I hate something so much that I claimed did not exist? A common question that I asked myself before my conversion.

I was an avid atheist. I hated the church. I was 19 or so when I first started "repenting." But my public devotion was only a cover up to get my friends and family off my back. Instead of doing what Christians "should" be doing in church, I had spent most of my time in church cleaning cocaine residue out of my nose from the night before. I was the perfect epitome of a hypocrite.

I was 13 when I first fell in love. She gave me security and an escape from the reality that surrounded me. Her name was cocaine. Little did I know I would spend the next 7 years of my life wrapped around her finger. I was very good at hiding my relationship with her along with smoking, drinking, sex, and all the other attributes that usually come with a bohemian lifestyle. Of course, I had consequences. I spent time in alternative schools, behavior programs, jail, and endured many lectures from my elders trying tirelessly to steer me on the right path. But, a true victim of addiction will never change his ways without a spiritual experience that cannot be explained by secular comprehension.

My admission to Capstone Treatment Center was the final turning point of my life. It took a few weeks in the program until I finally decided to attempt to get sober. I was unsure of what my purpose was and out of ultimate desperation, I uttered a prayer asking God to take over my life. Almost immediately, He did. I discovered my calling to help young men with addiction.

After I was released, I was transferred to spend my summer at Patton Sober Living in Dallas, Texas before my fall semester at Harding University. I was eventually offered a job there in which I declined unless I felt a calling away from Harding. Not even 30 minutes later, I received news that I had an outstanding warrant in Indiana that could not be expunged. I was facing several months which would ultimately prohibit me from attending school in the fall. I turned myself in and entered the hearing after spending 4 days in an isolated cell. I was sentenced 15 days, which was the exact time I needed in order to make it to the first day of class.

I am now a senior at Harding University, 34 months sober. I was baptized on Sept. 24, 2023. I have dedicated my life toward helping others like me, broken

young men in the grips of addiction. I am extremely blessed to witness God's grace around me every single day. Jesus Christ changed my life!

Story 14: Generational Blessings

"Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise. No one can measure His greatness. Let EACH GENERATION tell its children of your mighty acts, let them proclaim your power." Psalm 145:3-4

Salvation testimonies are different depending on how the person grew up; the home atmosphere, the parents, life's trials, and poverty or wealth contributes to how a person even had an opportunity to hear the gospel message. I was so blessed to grow up in a loving, Christian home, with great parents that provided for us 3 kids, loved us, prayed for us, and always took us to church. We were given the opportunity to hear the gospel even from a very young age.

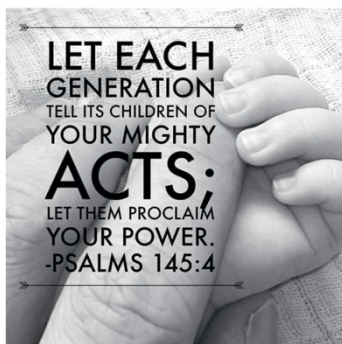


**Lynn Crow, Missionary
CD. Victoria, Tamps,
Mexico**

I remember I was in my Sunday School classroom at the age of 9 years old and for the first time, the gospel message of Jesus Christ became real to me. Yes, I had heard about Jesus all my younger years in church, but now my heart was open to the Holy Spirit to speak to me, to reveal that I was a sinner, and that I needed a Savior. That Sunday morning, I prayed with my teacher to receive Jesus as my Savior and even went forward during the church service to pray with my Pastor to confirm my decision to become a Christian, through the saving power of Jesus Christ. The year was 1957 and I've been serving Jesus since the age of 9! I didn't just get saved; I received a Call at the age of 13 in that same classroom and because of the Call, I've been a Missionary in Mexico with my husband, Bobby, for the last 48 years.

Recently a friend said, "Lynn, you grew up with a heritage of praying parents, grandparents, and Christian relatives that laid the foundation for each future generations in your family, from both sides of your parents that shared THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST!"

**PRAISE GOD! FROM THESE
GENERATIONAL BLESSINGS ALL
OUR FAMILY IS WALKING WITH
CHRIST!**



Story 15: The Lord Heard My Cry

“O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.” Psalm 30:2-3

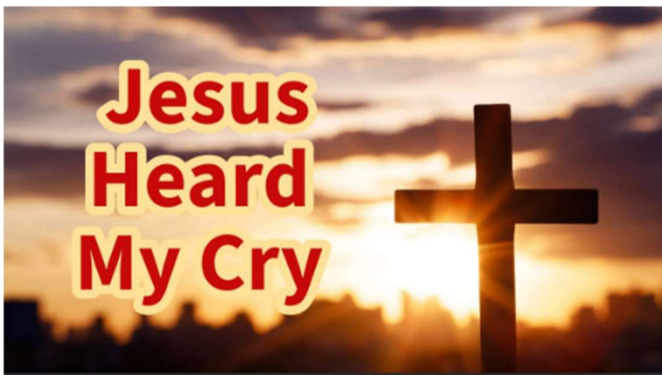


Gary Whitney
Ossian, Indiana

In 2020, within a span of six months, my mother, sister, and wife all passed away. These losses put me into a deep depression where I tried to heal by using drugs, alcohol, and many other vices. Ultimately, I was desperately seeking compassion about my situation from anyone who would notice, but no one did. Even when I tried reaching out to others, no one seemed to care or want to help me through my time of pain.

This deep depression without support led me to decide to end my life. I no longer wanted to live! I could not take any more pain! I went to a local retail store that I visited regularly with the intention of giving the manager my beloved dog. He was all that I had. As I was exiting my vehicle, something drew my attention to another building across the street. I drove over and turned into the parking lot when a man waved at me and nodded to come in. The building was a church. When I entered the church, I found the compassion I had been longing for.

At the next three services, I knelt at the altar, uncertain of what to expect. On the third time, I begged the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive me of my sins and believed in my heart that He rose from the dead. At that very moment, a preacher touched me on the shoulder and started praying for me. I was freed from the bondage of alcohol and drugs. I found a peace that passes understanding and a reason to press on as I serve my Lord and Savior, Jesus!



Story 16: I Am Convinced

"The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits." 2 Timothy 2:6

Jesus saved me while I was stationed at Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, NC. I had gone to the Ammunition Supply Point to turn in residue. The person in charge of the residue yard was Mr. Tommy Burns, who later became my pastor. He asked me if I attended church and if I was saved, to which I boldly replied, "No," for both questions. I even told him that there was no point in attending church on Sunday if I planned to curse and smoke all week long.

One Sunday morning I woke up my wife and said we are going to church. I told her a pastor I met at work had invited me to hear what he was talking about.

When we arrived, the pastor wasn't preaching that Sunday; instead, there was a guest preacher. At the end of the service, during the altar call, the guest preacher said, "There is a man here who is not living right and his son is watching everything he does, thinking it is right, but deep down, he knows it is all wrong."

In that moment, I told God I was going to the altar because that was what my family needed from me. God spoke to me, saying that I had voids in my life that only He could fill. I needed to come to Him, and He would draw my family to Him. That day, I gave my life to Jesus and immediately began to put God's word into practice. I said, "Jesus, the Bible says that You are a deliverer. I need to be delivered from smoking." The following Sunday, I attended church again and was delivered from smoking without experiencing any withdrawal symptoms. I accepted the Lord over 20 years ago, and I have been convinced ever since.



Mark Wrench
San Antonio, Texas

I'm Convinced!

Story 17: If You Are Real. . .

“Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’” John 3:3



Myrna Brogdon
Los Fresnos, Texas

Growing up, my mother, a widow, took my sister and me to church every Sunday. One Sunday, the minister invited those interested in receiving Jesus as their Savior to come forward for prayer. I noticed my friends received Bibles. I wanted one too, so I went forward, but I had no real conversion experience, even though my mother thought I had. As a result, she told me that I was a Christian. Therefore, I thought I was. But God knew I wasn't.

By 1977, my life was falling apart due to marital issues, sickly babies, and financial struggles. I was angry, difficult to be around, and a heavy smoker trying unsuccessfully to quit. During that time, Betty Thompson, a third-grade teacher and authentic Christian, noticed me. She befriended me and prayed daily without me knowing it for my life to change. One day, I told her about my son Jack going to the hospital, and she simply said, “Have faith in God.” Those words pierced my heart, and I left feeling emotional.

I had recently received a Christian autobiography, Shout It From the Housetops, written by Pat Robertson, which I thought was fiction. I took it with me to the hospital. The person in the book was a Christian who was on fire for the Lord, zealously living out his real, personal relationship daily with Jesus Christ. I thought to myself, “I wish this book was true, because all the Christians I know are hypocrites. They go to church on Sunday and live like the devil the rest of the week.”

In that moment, Jack began to cry, so I called the nurse. After giving him medication, she noticed my book and exclaimed, “That book is a true story!” This caught my attention, and she started sharing her testimony about the things Jesus Christ had done in her life, which mirrored what I had read. She said, “As a nurse, I’ve never shared like this with anyone at work.”

Following our conversation, I felt a strong desire to finish the book and embrace Jesus as my Savior. So, four days later, at home alone, I called out, “If You, God, are real, I want to know You and be delivered from these cigarettes.” Instantly, I felt a peace flood over me that I had never experienced before, and I was freed from smoking, and I received Jesus as my Savior!

Story 18: The Lost Sheep

"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." Luke 15:7

I thought I had retired from a 40-year coaching career in 2012 when I left Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas. In 2015 I got a call out of the blue to go to Norway and Coach the Asane Seahawks. I really felt like God was in the move and had a spiritual reason for the trip.

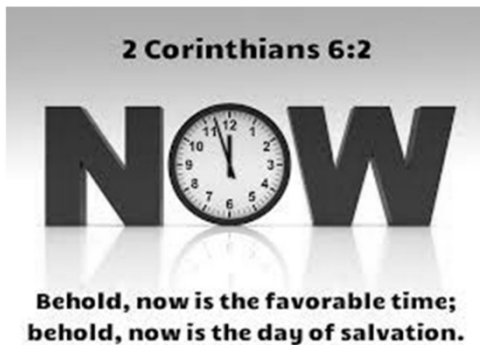
A nice young engineer who played defensive back picked me up from the airport and since the next day was Sunday, I ask him where he went to church. He laughed, "We don't believe in fairy tales like Jesus and the Easter Bunny like you Americans." I said to myself, "Lord, why am I here?"



Mark Reeve
Mountain Home, Texas

Our first road game we played in Oslo and spent the night in the stadium locker room. About 3 a.m. the Lord woke me up. I went out to the stands and there sat Hasse Hellan. He told me that ever since I came, God had been convicting him of how he lived his life. Hasse was probably the last guy on the team I would have thought who would receive Christ, but that night he did.

Three months later we played in Oslo for a second time, but this time I was able to lead the team in the Lord's Prayer before the National Championship game, which we won. I went on to coach Hasse on two other teams in Iceland and Serbia. Hasse lives in Bergen, Norway and is raising his son as a Christian. God sent me 5,500 miles for a reason. Luke 15:4-7.



Story 19: Everyone Has a Story!

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” James 1:12



Piercen Harnish
Bluffton, Indiana

As an adult, I sometimes feel my “conversion” story doesn’t carry the same weight as some of the ones you often hear. I didn’t hit rock bottom before I found Jesus. I didn’t struggle with drinking, drugs, or some massive outward sin, and because of that, I’ve wondered if my story is as impactful as those dramatic turnaround stories. But what I’ve learned in my adult life is that my story is just as meaningful as anyone else’s.

I grew up in a home with parents who were Christians. What a blessing that was, but I failed to realize it at the time. I attended church every Sunday and Wednesday night. I participated in Campus Life events every Monday evening and Wednesday morning. I was part of a CORE leadership group that met regularly during the week. I went to every Vacation Bible School and mission trip I could. I played every sport possible and eventually played college football at a local Christian university. Looking back now, I see how truly blessed I was.

My personal walk with Jesus Christ began at a church camp in Grand Rapids, Michigan, when I was in the 8th grade. I was sitting in a large session listening to the guest speaker, who was urging us to live for Jesus daily. He made a comment that has stuck with me to this day: “The only way to Heaven is believing in Jesus Christ as your Savior and welcoming the Holy Spirit into your heart.” He reminded us that nothing else in life truly matters until we encounter that moment of personal faith. That’s when I realized that up to that point, everyone else had been “doing my faith” for me. I needed to take ownership of my life and invite Jesus into it. I raised my hand, and a counselor took me into the hallway, where I asked Jesus to come into my life forever.

Don’t discount your own story. There will always be someone who needs to hear it. No matter where you are in life, Jesus is the only way to eternal life—and once you know Him, everything else will follow.



Story 20: It's Never Too Late!

"But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop; some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty." Matthew 13:8

The Bible says that God does not want anyone to perish. I believe that!! My heart was hard when I was young. I did not want to hear about God or church. It upset me when Mom "preached" at me. Yet her words planted the seed, and Jesus did the rest. Jesus was knocking at my heart's door long before I dedicated my life to Him.

At the age of 12, I attended a revival service and was moved deeply. I went forward during the altar call and invited Jesus to become my Lord and Savior, but I continued on with life as usual and my relationship with Jesus did not grow.



Edith Saldivar
Harlingen, Texas

On a different occasion, I prayed the sinner's prayer with my mom's pastor. I was sick and she called him. He came, prayed for my healing, and asked if I wanted to receive Jesus Christ into my life. I did, but again, I did not build a relationship or follow Him. But Jesus did not give up on me.

I found a CD case at work one day. I tried to find the owner, but was unsuccessful. Being curious, I opened the case and saw that all the artists were unknown to me. I played and heard the songs and found that it was Christian music. "Oh no," I told myself, "I don't want to hear that." But something inside of me said, "Go ahead, play the songs." The words of the songs began to minister to me. I wasn't just hearing the music; I was actually listening to it.

I began to focus more seriously on Jesus and started going to church. One Sunday at church, the pastor gave an altar call. I was 35 years old when, for the 3rd time, I asked Jesus into my heart and dedicated my life to Him. Only this time, my decision to receive Christ took root. God had been preparing my heart over the years, but this time the gospel message of Jesus finally landed in good soil and took root. How is the condition of your heart? Is it good soil in which to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior? I pray that it is.



Story 21: From Darkness to Light

“To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” Acts 26:18



Suzanne Soto
La Feria, Texas

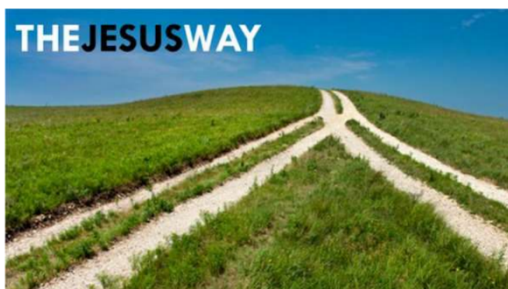
There is a line from a song that says, “I did it my way.” That was me. I had been taught by my parents to be self-sufficient, so I grew up doing things the way I thought they should be done.

I always considered myself a “good” person. I helped others in school, volunteered for various events, and mowed people’s yards, among other things. Since I wasn’t doing “evil” things like killing or robbing stores, I thought that meant I was “good.”

When I moved to Texas, a colleague at work talked to me frequently about Jesus and insisted that I needed to be born again. I didn’t think I needed Jesus because I already considered myself a “good person.” After several conversations, she invited me to her church. I decided to attend one Sunday to see what it was all about.

It was there that I heard the pastor read Romans 3:10, 12: “There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none who does good, no, not one.” Wow! I had never heard that before! This scripture indicated that I wasn’t righteous or good, despite my belief otherwise. I learned that only through Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross, which took my sins away, could I be made righteous. I wanted that! I confessed my sins and asked Jesus to come into my heart. I was now born again, and a whole new way of living awaited me.

Philippians 2:12 (AMP) states, “...work out your salvation with fear and trembling... to avoid anything that might offend God or discredit the name of Christ.” Now that I was a Christian, I could no longer live and do things “my way.” I was living a life that represented Jesus as my Lord and Savior. That has been the best decision I have ever made. Will you allow Jesus to be Lord and Savior in your heart and start doing things THE JESUS WAY?

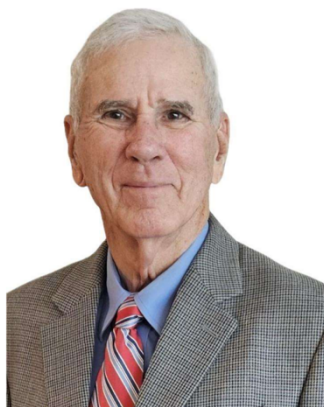


Story 22: One Step at a Time

“The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.” Proverbs 16:9

I was raised in a Christian home and had very loving parents. I felt secure in school and the relationships I had in the Texas community where I lived. Life was simple back then.

At the age of 11, our pastor called my brother and I into his office and explained how to receive Christ as Savior. We both accepted Jesus as our Savior and were baptized at the same time. Unfortunately, I was just acting religious, as there were no lasting changes in my life. I kept doing what the world was doing, and I turned my back on the Lord.



Gayle Brogdon
Los Fresnos, Texas

Years later, I married, and was offered a job at a junior college in South Texas. One of the “perks” was a membership to a Country Club.

My colleagues were golfers and I became addicted to the game, playing it during my lunch hour and on weekends. During this time, I started becoming a heavy drinker, and was moving towards becoming an alcoholic.

When Myrna, my wife, received Christ as Savior, the transformation was unbelievable. Her change was like Paul on the road to Damascus. She was constantly reading her Bible and listening to Christian TV. This went on for quite a while, until I could see that the changes in her had not faded, but had actually gotten stronger. But I was still playing golf and drinking during this time.

She would ask me to take her to church, but I would tell her, “No, but you’re free to go if you want to.” She kept asking me if I would like to go to church with her. Finally, one day, I decided I would go. I began attending church more and more, and could see that the road I was going down was leading to destruction. She had been praying for me to quit drinking, and I was ready to quit that lifestyle. Since that

time, when I rededicated my life to Jesus Christ, I have never had the desire to drink alcohol again. It was God’s timing. Today my Christian walk has been in place for more than 40 years, and I am glad that the Lord had mercy on me and my family.



Story 23: I Want What She Has

"God saved you by His grace when you believed and you can't take credit for this: it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it." Ephesians 2:8-9



Eulalia Tamez
Brownsville, Texas

At age 24, I was empty and sad. What was wrong with me?? I tried to fill that emptiness with boyfriend, husband, and child, but to no avail.

In November 1977, I heard Ms. Lynn Colvin on the phone talking about how wonderful her Jesus was, as if she knew Him personally. I told my boss, Norton Colvin, I wanted to know Jesus the way his wife knew Jesus. He said I needed to ask God to save me and was sending me to a women's meeting.

It was there I heard how Jesus Christ gave His life and shed His Blood to forgive all my sins. **That by the Grace of God I was saved through faith in Jesus Christ not of any works I can do.**

Salvation is a free gift, paid for with Jesus' blood.

When the speaker asked who wanted to receive Jesus as their Savior, I raised both my hands to make sure she saw me so I could ask Jesus to come into my heart. As I said the sinner's prayer, I felt this wave flow from my head to toe, filling the emptiness I had carried so long. My heart felt so full. I felt so wonderful, sooooo light, like floating on air. The speaker gave me a book called, *New Birth*.

The Lord reminded me recently of when I was 10 yrs old, and how I was telling God that I wanted Him to be real to me. That I wanted to talk to Him, and Him to talk to me, and to know Him personally. He answered that prayer 14 years later, at the age of 24.

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast"

(NKJV)

Now, at 72, I am still getting to know the Lord my God, Father, and Holy Spirit. I cannot do life without Him. He is the Lord of my life and a priority, where it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, and knowing how much the Lord loves me and I don't have to earn His love. And the life I now live in the flesh is by faith in the Son of God who loved me and died for me.

Story 24: The Lamb's Book of Life

"Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

Revelation 21:27

I was born in Louisville, Kentucky. My parents were Christians and attended church regularly. When I was 5 years old, God gave my father a dream to work as a missionary in Mexico. He quit his job at the railroad, moved us to Brownsville, TX, and trusted God to provide for our family.

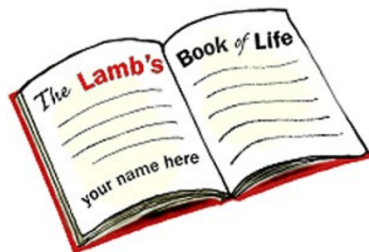
My parents were daily pouring into me and my brothers through their words and actions. I would soak up the testimonies that Dad would share about his missionary work. Mom was constantly quoting the Word of God to us. She would have us do "sword drills," a game in which she would give us a book of the Bible, a chapter, and verse, and see which of us could find it first.



Leigh Aten
Brownsville, Texas

I remember one day in particular when I was 6 years old. Mom brought me and my two older brothers together to pray, and to ask God to write our names in the Lamb's Book of Life. It made such an impression on me! To have my name written in the Lamb's Book of Life was so special. I am positive that I responded to subsequent altar calls more than once, but I consider that day when I was six as my starting point.

Looking over my life, I saw times where I was veering off the Christian path and going the way of the world, but God brought me back and delivered me from danger. My parents, Sunday School teachers, pastors, and Christian friends have helped me in my walk with the Lord. They continued to plant and water the word of God in my life. I am grateful that God has taught me about repentance, forgiveness, and listening to His still small voice. And that I've had the opportunity to serve Him through Children's Church, small group ministry, feeding the homeless, and cooking meals at retreats and Bible camps. My Christian walk has been a journey, but it all started with a prayer. Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life?



Story 25: He Loved Me Now

“The Lord appeared to us in the past saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving kindness.” Jeremiah 31:3



Clifford Wrench
South Padre Island, Texas

At the age of 12, I accepted Christ while attending a revival and was later baptized.

As a child, I regularly attended Sunday School and church, but I drifted away from that after leaving home. My husband and I met while we were both on active duty in the Army. We married in January 1965 in San Francisco, California. At that time, we enjoyed smoking, drinking, and partying. However, in April 1965, my husband experienced a radical conversion while stationed in San Francisco, while I was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas. I would try to call him at night, but he always seemed to be at church. This was overwhelming for me—his constant church attendance and the absence of smoking and drinking.

Then, one day, he told me, “I really love you now.” After several months, he decided to take leave and visit me. I could have taken leave as well, but I chose to keep working. During his time at church, he received great Bible teachings, which encouraged him not to preach to me but simply to be kind. When I came home from work, the apartment was clean, and dinner was prepared. He seemed to have so much peace, while I was still nervous and smoking. One Sunday, while I was at work, he attended church and asked the congregation to pray for me. I was upset when I found out.

One evening, I experienced pain in my left shoulder. He asked if he could pray for it. He put anointing oil on my shoulder, prayed, and immediately the pain disappeared! I asked him, “Where is that church you told me about? I’d like to go.” We attended a night service, and it felt as though the pastor was preaching directly to me. I decided to get up and leave, thinking my husband would follow me. However, instead of leaving, I found myself going to the front of the church. The pastor asked if I wanted to be saved, and I responded with tears, “Yes.” He then asked if I wanted to be baptized. “Yes,” I answered. He instructed the women to get me ready, and I was baptized that very night.



I had witnessed my husband’s transformed life and realized I wanted what he had. Later, I understood the significance of his statement that he “loved me now.”

Story 26: The Life of William “Bill” Wrench

When we think of accomplishments, we often think of career, accolades, and being “the first” in our field. By those measures, William Wrench had many achievements. He broke barriers, opened doors for others, and lived a life of leadership and service. But if you asked him, he would say that none of those accomplishments mattered as much as one: knowing Jesus Christ as his Savior and serving Him faithfully.

It was an honor and a privilege to share the story of my father’s faith at his Memorial Service—a story that shaped every part of his life and even the way he entered eternity.

My father wore many hats—husband, father, grandfather, brother, friend, teacher, and mentor. But above all, he was a Christian. He never wavered in his belief that his most important ministry began at home. He often reminded us that the life you live in private should match the life you live in public—and he truly lived that out. His faith shaped everything he did.

In his final days, after a brief but courageous battle with pancreatic cancer, we witnessed a strength that could only come from above. While in hospice care, unable to move on his own and reliant on a Hoyer lift, with speech limited, he continued to show us the power of God working through him.

On his final day—Tuesday, July 15—he woke up more alert than usual. It was, as many say, a final burst of clarity. I was so grateful to spend those precious moments with him—to talk, even briefly, and to share in the quiet comfort of our love. But by the afternoon, his condition began to decline, and he was in great pain. After receiving medication to ease his pain and anxiety, something incredible happened.

As my aunt and I sat by his bedside, he suddenly found the strength to try to rise. With remarkable clarity, he looked up and said, “I’m ready. I’m ready.” At first, I thought he might be confused, and I gently played along—“Dad, are you ready to go fishing?”—a favorite pastime of his. But he continued: “I’m ready.” Then, pointing upward, he said clearly: “This way. This way.”



Marva Wrench O’Neal
Rosenburg, Texas



William Wrench

That's when we knew. He wasn't confused. He wasn't hallucinating. He was communicating with his Heavenly Father. He was ready—not just to leave this world, but to enter the presence of the Lord he had served so faithfully. It was a holy moment—his final testimony. And it brought us deep peace.

Even in death, my father bore witness. He left this world not with fear or regret, but with peace, assurance, and clarity. I have no doubt that just beyond that moment, he heard the words he had longed for his entire life:

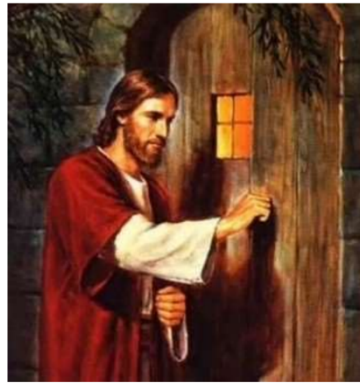
“Well done, My good and faithful servant.”

And that is the greatest legacy he leaves behind—not his many earthly firsts, but the eternal truth that a life anchored in Christ is the highest accomplishment of all.

* * * * *

“Behold, I stand
at the door, and
knock: if any
man hear my
voice, and open
the door, I will
come in to him
and will sup with
him and he with
Me.”

Revelation. 3:20



**ARE YOU READY TO
OPEN THE DOOR OF YOUR HEART TO
JESUS?**

***“For whoever will call on the name of the Lord
will be saved.” Romans 10:13***

* * * * *

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